

Judges 20:26 – 21:25 - Thursday, March 21st, 2013

(26) Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD. (27) So the children of Israel inquired of the LORD (the ark of the covenant of God *was* there in those days, (28) and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?" And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."

- You'll forgive me for saying this, in this way, but God has got them right where He wants them, namely, in a place of genuine humility.
- I'm learning as I grow in my relationship with the Jesus Christ, that the best place for me to be is in that humble place of utter brokenness.
- The scriptures are replete with remarkable examples of how God breaking us must precede God blessing us, and such is the case here.

(29) Then Israel set men in ambush all around Gibeah. (30) And the children of Israel went up against the children of Benjamin on the third day, and put themselves in battle array against Gibeah as at the other times. (31) So the children of Benjamin went out against the people, *and* were drawn away from the city. They began to strike down *and* kill some of the people, as at the other times, in the highways (one of which goes up to Bethel and the other to Gibeah) and in the field, about thirty men of Israel. (32) And the children of Benjamin said, "They *are* defeated before us, as at first." But the children of Israel said, "Let us flee and draw them away from the city to the highways." (33) So all the men of Israel rose from their place and put themselves in battle array at Baal Tamar. Then Israel's men in ambush burst forth from their position in the plain of Geba. (34) And ten thousand select men from all Israel came against Gibeah, and the battle was fierce. But *the Benjamites* did not know that disaster *was* upon them. (35) The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel. And the children of Israel destroyed that day twenty-five thousand one hundred Benjamites; all these drew the sword. (36) So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated. The men of Israel had given ground to the Benjamites, because they relied on the men in ambush whom they had set against Gibeah. (37) And the men in ambush quickly rushed upon Gibeah; the men in ambush spread out and struck the whole city with the edge of the sword. (38) Now the appointed signal between the men of Israel and the men in ambush was that they would make a great cloud of smoke rise up from the city, (39) whereupon the men of Israel would turn in battle. Now Benjamin had begun to strike *and* kill about thirty of the men of Israel. For they said, "Surely they are defeated before us, as *in* the first battle." (40) But when the cloud began to rise from the city in a column of smoke, the Benjamites looked behind them, and there was the whole city going up *in smoke* to heaven. (41) And when the men of Israel turned back, the men of Benjamin panicked, for they saw that disaster had come upon them. (42) Therefore they turned *their backs* before the men of Israel in the direction of the wilderness; but the battle overtook them, and whoever *came* out of the cities they destroyed in their midst. (43) They surrounded the Benjamites, chased them, *and* easily trampled them down as far as the front of Gibeah toward the east. (44) And eighteen thousand men of Benjamin fell; all these *were* men of valor. (45) Then they turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon; and they cut down five thousand of them on the highways. Then they pursued them relentlessly up to Gidom, and killed two thousand of them. (46) So all who fell of Benjamin that day were twenty-five thousand men who drew the sword; all these *were* men of valor.

- There's something here I wish to point out and it's something for which isn't easily seen at first glance as it relates to their military strategy.
- Here's what I'm thinking, this successful military strategy is a copy taken right out of the pages of the successful military strategy in Ai.
- The reason I point this out is that it would seemingly indicate that their genuine repentance and brokenness included the Word of God.

(47) But six hundred men turned and fled toward the wilderness to the rock of Rimmon, and they stayed at the rock of Rimmon for four months. (48) And the men of Israel turned back against the children of Benjamin, and struck them down with the edge of the sword—from *every* city, men and beasts, all who were found. They also set fire to all the cities they came to.

- We end the chapter with the question of why it is that they needed to go after these six hundred men when they'd already defeated them.
- I'm of the belief that this was over the top, and as such against God's will. I'm not alone in this belief as evidenced by the peril that comes.
- This is a classic case of "over kill," as it were, and clearly, the Israelites should not have done this, as it virtually wipes out the entire tribe.

Judges 21 (1) Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, "None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife." (2) Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before God till evening. They lifted up their voices and wept bitterly, (3) and said, "O LORD God of Israel, why has this come to pass in Israel, that today there should be one tribe *missing* in Israel?"

- Right out of the shoot here in the first verse, we see the Israelites unnecessarily making a rash vow that, as we will soon see, they'll regret.
- The reason being is that they have just virtually wiped out the entire tribe of Benjamin, and by virtue of their vow, they can't multiply again.
- Actually, they could technically multiply again as a tribe, however they would have to marry Gentiles, which was expressly forbidden then.

- Whenever we read a passage such as this, it's easy to just see it as words on the page, and in so doing miss the intensity of the moment.
- When we read that, "they lifted up their voices and wept bitterly," we're being told they were crying loudly, so much so, they were wailing.
- The significance of this is that it speaks to how sin is its own reward. Simply put, they are experiencing sin's sorrow, remorse and regret.

- If you really think about it, it's two-fold in the sense that they regret wiping out the last 600 men, and making the vow about their daughters.
- The lesson here is quite clear such that it teaches us the folly of rash decisions in the heat of the moment, and the rash vows that ensue.
- By that I mean; we're all prone to get caught up in the battles of life, and as such, get in the flesh because of it. This is where that leads.

- By the way, is it me, or does it sound like they are blaming God for all of this when they say, "O Lord God ...why has this come to pass?"
- You probably already know where I'm going with this so suffice it to say, we as believers are just as guilty of doing the very same thing.
- How often do we disobey God, or go outside the will of God, then put the blame on God for the very disaster we had created ourselves?

Proverbs 19:3 NKJV The foolishness of a man twists his way, And his heart frets against the LORD.

(4) So it was, on the next morning, that the people rose early and built an altar there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. (5) The children of Israel said, "Who *is there* among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the LORD?" For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, "He shall surely be put to death." (6) And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother, and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel today. (7) What shall we do for wives for those who remain, seeing we have sworn by the LORD that we will not give them our daughters as wives?"

- This passage makes you wonder how many attorneys were involved in this. The reason I say that is, they're looking for a legal loophole.
- In other words, they are now trying to devise a plan whereby they can get out of an agreement for which they are legally obligated to fulfill.
- Again, there's a lesson here that I believe the Holy Spirit wants to drive home in our lives, namely, we'll regret being harsh and being rash.

(8) And they said, "What one *is there* from the tribes of Israel who did not come up to Mizpah to the LORD?" And, in fact, no one had come to the camp from Jabesh Gilead to the assembly. (9) For when the people were counted, indeed, not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead *was* there. (10) So the congregation sent out there twelve thousand of their most valiant men, and commanded them, saying, "Go and strike the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead with the edge of the sword, including the women and children. (11) And this *is* the thing that you shall do: You shall utterly destroy every male, and every woman who has known a man intimately." (12) So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins who had not known a man intimately; and they brought them to the camp at Shiloh, which is in the land of Canaan. (13) Then the whole congregation sent *word* to the children of Benjamin who *were* at the rock of Rimmon, and announced peace to them. (14) So Benjamin came back at that time, and they gave them the women whom they had saved alive of the women of Jabesh Gilead; and yet they had not found enough for them. (15) And the people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a void in the tribes of Israel. (16) Then the elders of the congregation said, "What shall we do for wives for those who remain, since the women of Benjamin have been destroyed?"

- OK, so, four hundred down, and only two hundred to go. I am keenly aware that saying this, this way may come off as being a little callous.
- However, to say that what they do here is callous would be the understatement of understatement for what is deemed obvious reasons.
- The extent to which man will go to get out of doing something, or not doing something is utterly astonishing as evidenced by what they do.

(17) And they said, "*There must be* an inheritance for the survivors of Benjamin, that a tribe may not be destroyed from Israel. (18) However, we cannot give them wives from our daughters, for the children of Israel have sworn an oath, saying, 'Cursed *be* the one who gives a wife to Benjamin.' " (19) Then they said, "In fact, *there is* a yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh, which *is* north of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goes up from Bethel to Shechem, and south of Lebonah." (20) Therefore they instructed the children of Benjamin, saying, "Go, lie in wait in the vineyards, (21) and watch; and just when the daughters of Shiloh come out to perform their dances, then come out from the vineyards, and every man catch a wife for himself from the daughters of Shiloh; then go to the land of Benjamin. (22) Then it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain, that we will say to them, 'Be kind to them for our sakes, because we did not take a wife for any of them in the war; for *it is not as though* you have given the *women* to them at this time, making yourselves guilty of your oath.' " (23) And the children of Benjamin did so; they took enough wives for their number from those who danced, whom they caught. Then they went and returned to their inheritance, and they rebuilt the cities and dwelt in them. (24) So the children of Israel departed from there at that time, every man to his tribe and family; they went out from there, every man to his inheritance.

- Perhaps you'll indulge me for just a moment before we bring this chapter, and this book of Judges to a much-welcomed end, as it were.
- The plan they come up with here for the remaining 200 wives is arguably a brilliant one such that they're not technically breaking their vow.
- After all, they had only vowed to not "give" their daughters to Benjamites, but that didn't mean they couldn't be abducted by the Benjamites.

- Here's what I'm thinking, why didn't they put in as much effort to obey God's will in the first place as they did to come up with this loophole?
- The only answer I can come up with is that once we mess up, our flesh wants to cover up. In other words, wrong will often lead to wrong.
- This is the case with lying, once you lie, you have to keep lying in order to keep the original lie alive. In other words, lying leads to lying.

(25) In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

- I can't think of any better way to sum up these last chapters in the book of Judges. This is what I like to call, "the why behind the what."
- The reason why they'd become so utterly evil and depraved was because there was no king, and they did what was right in their own eyes.
- Would to God that it is never said of us, that we just did whatever we thought was right in our own eyes, lest we do so to our own peril.